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DEVELOPING SELF-EDITING SKILLS OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

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Abstract. Mastering academic writing is widely acknowledged as crucial for the professional development of doctoral students and their success in publishing in reputable journals. However, many PhD candidates encounter significant challenges in this area, largely due to inadequate support from supervisors and limited access to training courses. This deficit is particularly pronounced in self-editing skills training, which can result in frustration and decreased confidence in their writing abilities. There is scarce research in pedagogical theory and practice that describes pedagogical models or technologies that contribute to the development of self-editing skills in research paper writing. The aim of this study is to scientifically justify, develop, and test a pedagogical technology aimed at enhancing PhD students' self-editing skills. The development of the technology is based on systematic and process-oriented approaches, as well as social constructivism theory, which is reflected in the practical implementation of peer learning and project activities. The pedagogical technology is implemented within the framework of an English-language course "English for Researchers: Editing Research Papers". The empirical study involved 29 graduate students from South Ural State University. The feedback survey conducted after the course's implementation assessed its effectiveness based on the criteria of participant satisfaction. Results indicate high levels of satisfaction with course structure, content, and delivery, with participants reporting significant improvements in their ability to self-edit research papers. The findings have far-reaching implications for enhancing doctoral education by emphasizing the necessity of integrating self-editing training within academic curricula. The novelty of the study lies in the author's proposal and theoretical justification of a pedagogical technology that positions the editing process as a distinct type of activity within publication activity, which enables PhD students to become independent and autonomous authors of research papers and fosters PhD students' professional growth in the field of academic publishing.

Keywords: pedagogical technology, PhD students, academic writing, self-editing skills, peer learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

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РАЗВИТИЕ УМЕНИЙ АСПИРАНТОВ В ОБЛАСТИ САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОГО РЕДАКТИРОВАНИЯ НАУЧНЫХ СТАТЕЙ

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Аннотация. Хотя развитие умений аспирантов в области академического письма признается важным для профессионального развития и успешной публикационной активности, аспиранты сталкиваются с серьезными трудностями при написании научных статей из-за недостаточной поддержки со стороны научных руководителей и недостатка курсов обучения в области освоения навыков

самостоятельного редактирования, что приводит к фрустрации и снижению уверенности в себе. В педагогической теории и практике мало исследований, описывающих педагогические модели или технологии, способствующие развитию навыков самостоятельного редактирования научных текстов. Целью исследования является научное обоснование, разработка и апробация педагогической технологии, направленной на развитие навыков самостоятельного редактирования научных текстов аспирантов. В основу разработки технологии легли системный и процессный подходы, теория социального конструктивизма, нашедшая свое отражение в практической реализации педагогической технологии через взаимное обучение и проектную деятельность. Педагогическая технология прошла апробацию в рамках англоязычного курса English for Researchers: Editing Research Papers. Участниками эмпирического исследования стали 29 аспирантов Южно-Уральского государственного университета. Опрос, проведенный после реализации курса, позволил оценить его эффективность по критерию удовлетворенности. Результаты показали высокий уровень удовлетворенности аспирантов структурой курса, его содержанием, организацией и методами реализации. Аспиранты отметили значимость конструктивной обратной связи, взаимного обучения и отметили значительные успехи в области самостоятельного редактирования научных статей. Полученные результаты указывают на необходимость интеграции обучения самостоятельному редактированию научных текстов в образовательные программы аспирантуры. Новизна исследования заключается в том, что автор предлагает и теоретически обосновывает педагогическую технологию, которая позиционирует процесс редактирования как отдельный вид деятельности в публикационной активности, что позволяет аспирантам стать независимыми и автономными авторами и редакторами научных статей и способствует их профессиональному росту в области академических публикаций.

Ключевые слова: педагогическая технология, аспиранты, академическое письмо, навыки самостоятельного редактирования, взаимное обучение, проектное обучение (PjBL)

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Introduction

Mastering academic writing skills might help novice researchers build their academic career, contribute to the disciplinary-written discourse and publish the results of their research in high-reputed journals [10]. Motivated in part by institutional requirements and their own career goals, most doctoral students have acknowledged that being actively involved in the publishing process is a crucial aspect of the learning experience during their doctoral studies. Both students and faculty view doctoral publishing as a form of professional growth essential for pursuing an academic career in higher education [9, 17, 25].

Nevertheless, mastering academic writing skills can be challenging as doctoral students may encounter a set of problems in their doctoral journey. One of the problems is that many scientific advisers consider that academic writing skills is a must-have for doctoral students and, as a result, scientific advisers do not provide the necessary support in research paper writing while PhD students are frustrated not knowing what to write, where to write, what the stages of academic writing are, what the format of research paper is and what academic writing conventions in their discipline are [19]. A global study conducted by S. Dinham and C. Scott revealed that students

who received support from their supervisors or were part of an institution with a clear policy regarding postgraduate publication had a higher likelihood of publishing compared to those who did not [7]. Multiple studies indicate that many new faculty members believe they could have been better prepared for their early careers if their doctoral programs had been structured differently [14, 15]. Additionally, non-native English speakers (NNESSs) may face extra hurdles, as the rhetorical conventions in their native languages can differ from the Anglo-Saxon style, necessitating more time for them to develop their writing abilities and gain confidence in using Academic English [9].

Ultimately, although higher education institutions are working to enhance their standings in international university rankings by establishing Centers of Academic Writing (CAWs) that teach PhD students how to write research papers in English, these CAWs focus on one aspect: the writer's perspective in academic writing. To gain a well-rounded understanding of publishing research papers, PhD students need a more holistic approach that includes developing abilities as writers and editors or reviewers. While CAWs offer courses in academic writing tailored to various student and faculty groups, they do not provide training to improve peer-reviewing and

self-editing skills. By providing courses on developing self-editing skills we can equip PhD students with the rods and not with the fish in the form CAWs services on proofreading and enable PhD students become autonomous writers. English language course that is the integral part of PhD studies can become the solution for the problem.

Thus, the focus of this research is developing self-editing skills of PhD students via holistic approach to academic writing through the discipline of English language. Self-editing can be understood as a process and a set of skills. Self-editing as a process refers to the systematic review and revision of one's own writing. It includes evaluating content clarity, organization, grammar, punctuation, and style [25]. Self-editing skills are the abilities to critically assess and refine one's writing including a good understanding of language mechanics, stylistic conventions, and the specific requirements of the journal readership [20].

While advanced self-editing skills can grant PhD students greater independence in the publishing process and enhance their confidence in thesis writing, PhD students typically do not receive formal training in managing their writing process, including self-editing [5, 8, 15, 23]. This lack of training can lead to feelings of doubt and a loss of control over their writing, which can adversely affect the self-esteem of doctoral students. The assumption that students will acquire these skills through trial-and-error can be daunting, particularly without sufficient guidance from supervisors or institutions [5]. A. Sverdlik et al. argue that the emotional challenges associated with writing, such as frustration and confusion, often overshadow the doctoral journey. These negative emotions can reduce motivation and involvement in self-editing process, making it hard for students to establish effective editing practices [23]. These difficulties underscore the need for specialized training and intervention programs tailored to the specific self-editing skill requirements of PhD students.

The research literature states that developing self-editing skills can be effectively achieved through a combination of strategies and technologies, namely, targeted instruction, collaborative learning, peer-learning, reflective practices, technological support, focused workshops and training courses [21]. Targeted instruction helps PhD students focus on frequent errors, and practical techniques like reading aloud or utilizing line-by-line checks enable easier identification of mis-

takes. Implementing a self-editing checklist allows doctoral students to systematically address common writing issues, while peer review sessions encourage collaborative critique and enhance critical thinking. Additionally, reflective practices, such as keeping a journal on editing experiences, promote self-awareness, and organized workshops can provide targeted skill development through hands-on practice and feedback [20, 21].

The significance of teacher intervention and peer interaction in developing writing skills is extensively documented. N.M. Diab emphasizes the essential roles of both teacher intervention and peer interaction in nurturing learner autonomy, suggesting that targeted corrections can enhance linguistic awareness in students [6]. This aligns with findings that effective feedback processes, regardless of their source, are vital for learners to make sense of their performances and develop robust writing practices [4, 26]. The varying perceptions of feedback underscore its nature as a dialogic endeavor [24]. Cahusac de Caux and Pretorius highlight how collaborative writing groups foster collegiality and trust, allowing members to engage in a dialogic process that leads to improved writing proficiency and enhanced self-esteem. Participants in these settings have reported significant improvements in their reflective practices and academic identity, reinforcing the notion that writing is not merely an isolated individual activity but rather a collaborative effort that can lead to shared learning experiences [3]. Lee A. and Boud D. advocate for writing groups as vehicles for fostering critical feedback [2]. These groups facilitate a shift in perspective, transforming writing from a private endeavor into a public and shared activity [16].

Doctoral programs illustrate the critical role of peer review in graduate education. Findings from Adamek M.E. indicate that students initially experienced trepidation regarding peer review but eventually came to embrace it as an essential aspect of scholarly writing [1]. This transition underscores the value of collaborative peer interactions, which align with B. Kamler's call for deliberate pedagogical practices that can influence publication rates among doctoral graduates [12]. Editing phase of writing, as highlighted in various studies, can significantly benefit from peer editing. When effectively implemented, peer editing not only enhances students' writing skills but also bolsters their writing self-efficacy [1, 6]. Despite its potential, peer editing remains unde-

rutilized in educational settings [11]. Thus, peer editing and collaborative feedback mechanisms are invaluable for enhancing students' writing skills, self-efficacy, and overall academic development. Recognizing and implementing these strategies within educational curricula could foster a more supportive and effective writing environment for students, ultimately leading to autonomous and skilled writers equipped for the challenges of academia and beyond.

Though the extensive literature on developing self-editing skills of doctoral students highlights the need for a combination of teacher intervention and peer interaction, scarce research can be found on the technology utilizing these two sources of support [3, 16, 24]. Furthermore, in educational practice, self-editing is often confined to the proofreading stage of the editing process, primarily addressing language and stylistic concerns. In contrast, crucial aspects such as substantive editing, structural editing, and copyediting are frequently overlooked in training courses in academic writing. The author's assertion is that if the doctoral students are given the holistic picture of research paper editing and are actively involved in peer-editing process, they will get a better understanding of how to polish and improve their research papers, thus, ultimately, becoming autonomous writers.

The research aims to test the technology of developing self-editing skills of PhD students via English taught course "English for Researchers: Research Paper Editing". The objectives of the research are:

- to describe the theoretical basis for the technology;
- to describe the technology used to develop self-editing skills;
- to analyze PhD students' feedback on the technology implementation via English taught course.

Methods

To develop self-editing skills of PhD students the author created a pedagogical technology that is understood as a systematic function of all elements involved in the educational process, grounded in scientific principles, organized within certain time and space, and aimed at achieving specific outcomes [22]. The pedagogical technology is based on system and process approaches and implemented via peer-learning and Project-Base Learning (PjBL).

The system approach framed the education process of training self-editing skills as an inter-

connected system, where goal, methods, teaching strategies, student-teacher interaction, and outcomes were conformed to each other. The process approach allowed to organize the development of self-editing skills as a process consisting of two main phases: 1. peer-editing (where PhD students gained practical experience in substantive editing, structural editing, copyediting, and proofreading their peers' work) and self-editing (where PhD students worked on a project focused on revising their own drafts of research papers. Peer learning was used as a leading strategy to develop self-editing skills and PjBL was selected as a teaching method as the ultimate goal of the training course in self-editing skills was to self-edit the drafts of research papers, drawing on the peer-editing experience of PhD students obtained throughout the course.

The developed technology was implemented through a course called "English for Researchers: Research Paper Editing," which was part of the PhD education program in foreign languages and took place in the fourth term. The first three terms doctoral students focused on enhancing their critical reading, speaking, and writing skills and learned to critically analyze research literature, present their research at international conferences, and write research papers in IMRAD format. As a result, PhD students had acquired the necessary skills in research publishing and speaking before they were trained in self-editing skills.

To assess the effectiveness of the technology implemented, a feedback survey was carried out during the course pilot. This survey consisted of 12 questions, including 9 closed-ended and 3 open-ended questions. PhD students were asked whether the training course met their expectations, how they would rate its structure and content, how they would evaluate the usefulness of the materials for developing self-editing skills and assignments in applying editing techniques; how would PhD students evaluate the instructor's feedback; whether the course aided PhD students in correcting common errors in their research papers; if PhD students would recommend the course to their peers. The open-ended questions aimed to uncover how well PhD students applied the self-editing techniques learned in their final projects, which aspects of the course they found most beneficial for enhancing their editing skills, and what suggestions they could provide to improve the course's content and delivery.

The surveys were administered anonymously online via Google Forms, with participants re-

ceiving the survey links through their personal email accounts. A total of 29 responses were collected from the doctoral students at South Ural State University (SUSU). These respondents were in their second year of the Doctoral program, representing various departments across five institutes and schools within SUSU: the School of Economics and Management, the Institute of Architecture and Construction, the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, the Institute of Engineering and Technology, and the Institute of Law. All participants had a B2 level of English proficiency. The course was piloted during the spring term of the 2023/2024 academic year and had 2 credits or one class per study week.

Results and Discussion

The idea of the created pedagogical technology was to give PhD students a comprehensive overview of the editing process and equip them with self-editing skills that widen the perspective of the research paper writer by that of an editor. The novelty of the technology is that editing process is considered to be a standalone process and not part of research paper writing.

The system approach allowed to present the pedagogical technology as a system. The goal of the technology was to raise PhD students' awareness on the stages and levels of editing and provide PhD students with the strategies of research paper editing via collaboration with peers on research paper drafts. The limitation of the technology was that the length of the course didn't allow PhD students to gain enough experience to become professional editors, nevertheless the feedback acquired from the peers and instructor improved the abilities of PhD students in critical analysis of their own research paper drafts. The technology was based on the principles of module structure (learning modules were developed according to the real process of research paper editing), peer learning via corrective feedback (PhD students evaluated the drafts of each other, negotiated meaning and gave constructive feedback based on subject-subject relationships), reflexivity (PhD students completed the project on self-editing their drafts and write essay about the common mistakes they make).

The technology comprised the target, content, procedural, and reflexive components and included motivational, communicative-practical, and reflexive-personal stages of realization. The purpose of the motivational phase of the technology was to cultivate students' interest in developing self-editing skills by providing them

with information about the various levels and stages of the editing process, explaining the principles of constructive feedback and giving self-check lists for each stage of editing to be used in group discussions on research paper drafts' evaluation. The second phase focused on developing editing skills of PhD students through educational activities such as debates, group discussions, brainstorming, case studies, and collaborative projects. The reflexive-personal phase aimed to encourage students to develop self-editing skills through the realization of the individual projects on research paper polishing and reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses regarding editing their own drafts and correcting most common mistakes they make.

This approach was realized via both instructor intervention and PhD collaboration. Constructivist theories of building knowledge were chosen as the rationale for the practical implementation of the technology developed that got their manifestation in peer learning. Peer-learning allows PhD students to learn from and with each other and provides PhD students an opportunity to explore, analyze, assess, integrate, and apply relevant information to complete the task of polishing research paper [2, 13]. The research states that when introduced effectively, peer learning helps students cultivate essential transferable social and communication skills such as teamwork, project management, research, and study skills by active listening, explanation, questioning, summarizing, speculating, and hypothesizing [18].

The instructor organized and facilitated the learning activities to enhance the advantages of peer interaction, while also encouraging active participation, promoting innovation, and instilling a sense of responsibility in students regarding their own learning process. To implement the technology via an English taught course on soft skills the author created the course "English for Researchers: Research Paper Editing" (Table 1).

After the course was piloted the PhD students were to give feedback on the course and express their perceptions of the course usefulness for developing their skills in research paper revision.

The results of the survey showed that all 29 (100%) PhD students reported that the course successfully met their expectations for improving their self-editing skills for research papers (Fig. 1). It indicates that the course on developing self-editing skills is relevant to the research needs of PhD students and provides them with the information not covered in previous courses of the PhD journey.

Table 1
Content of the training course
“English for Researchers: Research Paper Editing”

Unit 1	Introduction to editing
Unit 2	Levels of editing
Unit 3	Self-editing strategies
Unit 4	Substantive self-editing
Unit 5	Copyediting: paragraph level revision
Unit 6	Copyediting: sentence level revision
Unit 7	Proofreading for grammar and spelling
Unit 8	Proofreading for punctuation
Unit 9	Proofreading for mechanics
Unit 10	Project: Self-editing

When asked about the overall organization and structure of the course content, 21 students (72.4%) rated it as excellent, 6 students (20.7%)

considered it good, and only 1 student (3.4%) found the organization to be satisfactory (Fig. 2). These figures indicate strong approval of how the course material was organized, how the successive stages of the editing process were presented in the course.

Answering the question on the usefulness of the course materials all 29 (100%) respondents affirmed that the course materials were effective in enhancing their self-editing skills (Fig. 3). This fact can be explained by the novelty of the course content for PhD students as traditional programs on Foreign language training in PhD studies focus mostly on enhancing skills in analytical reading and research paper writing not offering a stand-alone course on editing skills’ training.

1. Did the course meet your expectations in terms of improving your editing skills for research papers?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

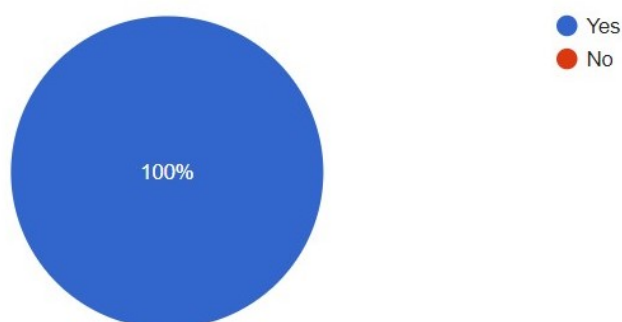


Fig. 1. Degree to which the expectations of PhD students in developing self-editing skills were met

2. How would you rate the overall organization and structure of the course content?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

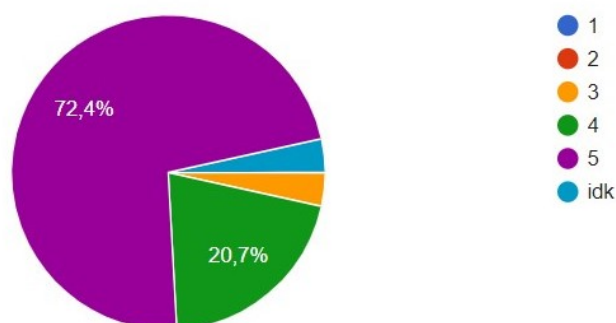


Fig. 2. Evaluation of the course content

3. Were the course materials and resources helpful in improving your editing skills?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

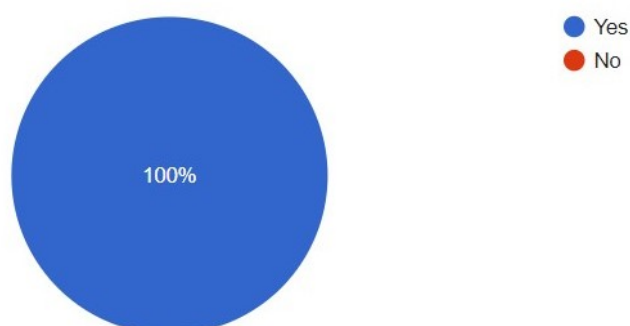


Fig. 3. Usefulness of the course materials and resources in improving self-editing skills

4. Did the course provide enough examples and practice exercises to reinforce the editing concepts?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

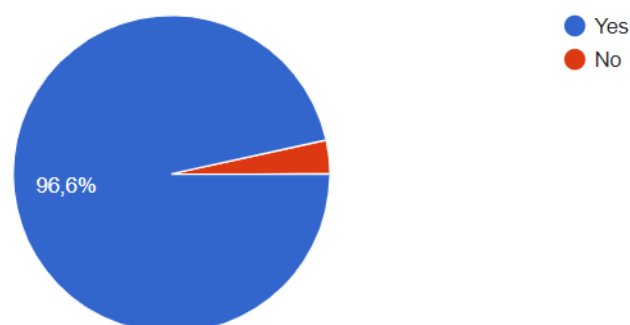


Fig. 4. Evaluation of the practical part of the course

The answers to the question about the practical part of the course were predominantly positive as a significant majority, 28 PhD students (96.6%), stated that the course provided sufficient examples and practice exercises to reinforce the editing concepts, with only one student (3.4%) disagreeing (Fig. 4). It indicates that the course doesn't only provide theoretical concepts but offers exercises to master self-editing skills and gain experience in research paper editing.

When PhD students were asked about the relevance of the course assignments and activities the majority of students evaluated them positively. 27 participants (93.1%) found course assignments helpful for mastering editing techniques, while just 2 students (6.9%) did not find them beneficial (Fig. 5). This result demonstrates that

the practice aimed at developing self-editing skills was aligned with the theoretical content of the course and with the overall aim of the training course.

The sixth question of the survey was aimed to find out if the teacher provided clear instructions and explanations for PhD students. The clarity of explanations and instructions was highly evaluated, with 28 students (96.6%) stating the instructions were easy to follow, and only one student (3.4%) did not agree (Fig. 6). It indicates that the instructor that provided the training was effective in communicating the necessary information and providing support.

When asked about the feedback and guidance from the instructor PhD students demonstrated that they highly valued the feedback pro-

5. Were the assignments and activities in the course helpful in applying editing techniques?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

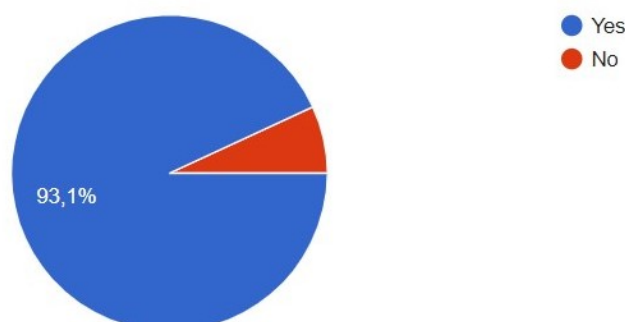


Fig. 5. Evaluation of the course assignments and activities

6. Were the explanations and instructions provided in the course easy to follow and understand?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

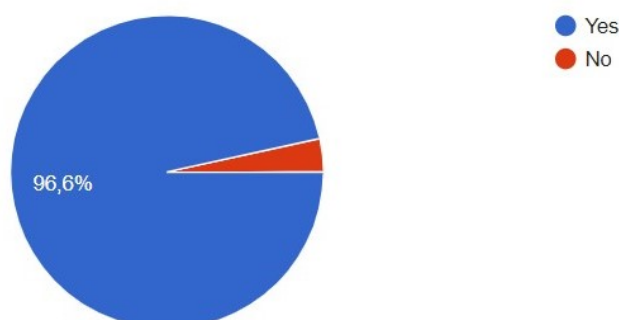


Fig. 6. Evaluation of the clarity of explanations and instructions provided by the teacher

vided. 18 respondents (62.1%) described it as extremely helpful, 10 (34.5%) rated it very helpful, and only 1 student (3.4%) considered it slightly helpful (Fig. 7). This result supports the idea that PhD students need guidance in research paper editing and highly appreciate when it is provided in the form of corrective and not summative feedback as it was done in the course.

All 29 students (100%) confirmed that the course helped them in identifying and correcting common mistakes typically found in research papers (Fig. 8). This result indicates that the focus on common mistakes provides PhD students with the necessary guidance during editing process highlighting the areas that need close attention and, thus, helping them to avoid typical mistakes in the future.

As the ninth question of the survey was

an open-ended one the PhD students shared their opinions on how well they applied self-editing techniques learned throughout the course in the final project. 29 (100%) of the respondents reported they effectively applied self-editing techniques learned throughout the course and recognized a significant improvement in the coherence, readability, and structure of their papers. 27 participants (93.1%) noted that revisions for clarity and consistency, alongside incorporating peer feedback and a strong understanding of editing criteria and stages contributed to a polished final result. Additionally, 28 PhD students (96.6%) claimed they utilized nearly all self-editing techniques, enabling them to confidently address paper structure and content issues as well as grammatical and punctuation errors, leading to polished drafts of their research papers.

7. How helpful was the feedback and guidance provided by the instructor throughout the course?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

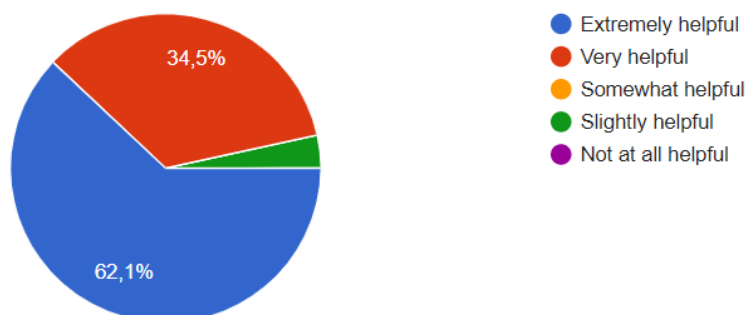


Fig. 7. Evaluation of the instructor's feedback and guidance

8. Did the course help you in identifying and correcting common mistakes in research papers?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

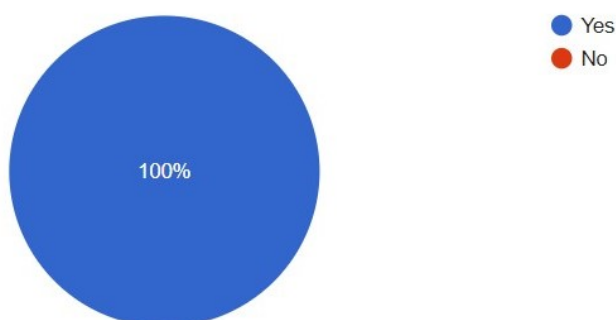


Fig. 8. Value of the course in identifying and correcting common mistakes in research papers

12. Would you recommend this course to other PhD students looking to improve their editing skills for research papers?

29 ОТВЕТОВ

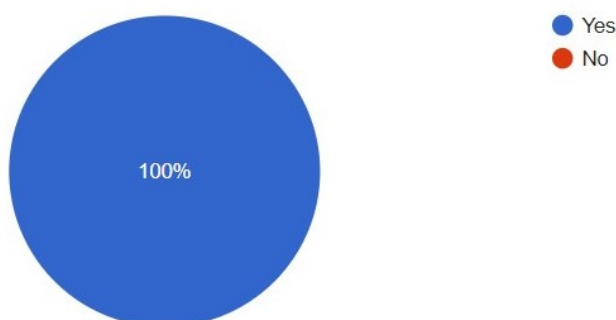


Fig. 9. Whether the course can be recommended to other PhD students

The tenth question of the survey was aimed to find out what aspects of the course PhD students found to be most valuable in improving their self-editing skills. The participants found several specific aspects of the course to be particularly valuable in enhancing their editing skills.

21 students (72.4%) PhD students highlighted the importance of the early sections of the course that focused on structure, logic, and overall coherence of articles, which they found essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of effective editing. 28 PhD students (96.6%), emphasized the value of practical techniques for proofreading, especially in relation to grammar, spelling, and punctuation corrections. Many participants reported that these materials significantly improved their ability to identify and rectify common writing errors, streamline their writing, and adopt a more consistent tone throughout their work. The majority of PhD students (21 students (72.4%)) stated that the interactive elements of the course, such as peer feedback and instructor critiques, were crucial in refining participants' self-editing techniques. Students noted that the process of receiving detailed feedback allowed them to hone their skills in concise writing while addressing various types of writing mistakes, particularly in academic writing contexts.

The eleventh open-ended question of the survey aimed to find out if PhD students had suggestions for course improvement. A mix of responses regarding suggestions for improving the course content and delivery was given. A significant portion of respondents (24 out of 29) stated that they had no suggestions for improvement. It indicates a high level of satisfaction with the course content and delivery. Many respondents expressed appreciation for the course, with comments highlighting the course's balance between theory and practice, and overall quality ("The course is designed perfectly", "Everything was so wonderful"). Several respondents offered thoughtful suggestions for the course improvement: incorporating more videos providing the examples editing; including more varied text lengths, focusing on shorter passages to facilitate easier error identification; using real articles as editing tasks instead of textbook assignments, indicating a preference for practical, authentic engagement with the material.

The high percentage of respondents who expressed satisfaction with the course suggests that the majority felt the course met their expectations

and learning needs. This could be an indicator that the course is well-structured and effectively delivered, leading to general contentment among students. Providing students with real-world applications can facilitate deeper understanding and retention of skills. While the course is praised for being well-balanced, integrating more practical exercises and varied error types could enrich the learning experience by challenging students and helping them become more adept at self-editing.

Finally, all participants (29 students, 100%) indicated that they would recommend this course to other PhD students seeking to improve their editing skills for research papers (Fig. 9).

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to create and test a pedagogical technology that will support PhD students in developing self-editing skills of the research papers, thus, enhancing PhD students' research skills necessary for a successful career in academia.

To fulfill the goal of the research the author defined the theoretical basis for the technology developed by utilizing system approach, process approach, theory of social constructivism and integrating peer learning and project-based methodologies. The implemented technology has demonstrated how targeted instruction can enhance the self-editing capabilities of PhD students, ultimately empowering them to become more autonomous writers and efficient members of the scholarly community.

The survey results reflect positive feedback regarding the effectiveness, organization, and instructional quality of the self-editing skills course, with all participants acknowledging its value and recommending it to their peers. Though the course is largely viewed positively by students, there is a clear opening for enhancements, particularly in terms of editing practice assignments.

This study is not without limitations. The relatively short duration of the course may hinder the deep mastery of self-editing skills, as PhD students may still require further practice and training to become proficient editors. Additionally, the study's findings are based on a small sample size from a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the results across diverse academic contexts.

Future research should focus on expanding the scope of this study by incorporating a larger and more varied cohort of PhD students. Investigating the long-term impact of self-editing trai-

ning on the publication success of doctoral graduates could yield valuable insights into the effectiveness of such interventions in fostering

academic independence. The results of the research can be used for developing training courses of PhD students in self-editing skills.

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